

**THE THREEFOLD STATE,
THE TRUE ASPECT OF
THE SOCIAL QUESTION**

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The threefold state, the true aspect of the social question by Rudolf Steiner

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RUDOLPF STEINER

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THE TRUE ASPECT
OF THE SOCIAL QUESTION

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AUTHORIZED ENGLISH TRANSLATION

THE perplexities that beset the translation of this book have been many and suggestive. It is never a light task to transfer into new garb a thought that has already found its appropriate shape, nor even to light upon terms in two languages that exactly cover each other's field of meaning and association. But, here, there is the added difficulty, that the conceptions,—and therefore the phrasing,—not seldom cut across commonly accepted notions; and the very precision of the underlying idea is often forced to find expression in a roundabout form. At the same time, this philosophy is not a remote and self-contained one, but has to do with everyday affairs. Thus, the translator has to solve each case as a question of concepts as well as of words, and to speak of familiar things in a way that is not trite, and yet not 'foreign.'

In some cases, the obvious word in English has wandered away from its original meaning and acquired a new connotation, leaving part of what it once stood for nameless and obscure. Or it exists as a noun, but lacks a corresponding verb and adjective.

Of this class, three terms have caused trouble to the translators: GEIST, RECHT, WIRTSCHAFT,

—all three repeatedly recurring in old and new connections, and of fundamental importance:—

GEIST (Old English 'Ghost') is *Spirit*, in its *primary sense*: that which inspires and directs thought and all forms of labour and action in a quite practical way. As used in this book, the word Geist is unusually clear and definite, but does not otherwise depart from common parlance; whereas, in English, 'Spirit' has come to imply something vaguely emotional and transcendental, —certainly not practical, whilst 'spiritual' is banished to the domain of religion. Hence, GEIST and GEISTESLEBEN have had to be translated variously—and therefore unsatisfactorily—'Spirit,' 'Intellect,' 'Life of the mind and spirit,' 'Spiritual and intellectual life,' etc., etc., according to the context.

RECHT ('Right,' in both the legal and moral sense) contains the old ideas of Right and Justice; and hence it implies Law, Equity, and what a citizen is by law entitled to: his 'Rights.' This term, in all its senses, is recognized in German popular speech and jurisprudence. In English, it has been necessary on each occasion to find an expression that would suggest as many of the connotations as possible. RECHTSSTAAT had to be rendered by the strained and unfamiliar '*Equity State*,' or by '*Political* (i.e. 'Civic') *State*,' in the restricted sense in which the author uses 'politics.' RECHT has to be sometimes '*Right*,' or '*Human rights*,'—sometimes '*Equity*.'

WIRTSCHAFT in its narrow meaning is '*House-keeping*,' in its wider sense '*Social Housekeeping*,'

i.e. *Practical Economics, or Financial and Industrial Organization*; — whilst the allied verb WIRTSCHAFTEN, with its suggestion of well-ordered family, or communal, life, can only be indicated by paraphrasing.

The translators know, that in their rendering something of the original has been lost; but they trust to the force of the ideas behind it to make their way even through an inadequate form.

THE TRANSLATORS.

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